

Cheshire FBU News

June 2007

Inside This Issue

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------|
| 1 | Targeted Response Vehicles | 4 | Membership |
| 2 | Large Scale Incidents | 5 | CPD Update |
| 3 | Reclining Chairs, Modernisation or Act of Spite? | 6 | Stop Message |

1. Targeted Response Vehicles

The General Secretary Matt Wrack has issued an 'All Members Circular' outlining the legal position regarding the pension issues with secondary contracts; the details of the circular will be with branches in the coming days but one point that sticks out for the attention of members who have or intend to staff them in the immediate future is;

"Some Fire Authorities are attempting to solve these problems (injury award shortfalls) by guaranteeing to make up any injury award either by taking out insurance or by guaranteeing to do so out of their own resources."

Such insurance arrangements and guarantees are unlawful and should not be relied upon.

Also for your information the TRV's are now off the run and management have assured the FBU that they are willing to address the Health & Safety issues surrounding the staffing of the TRV's. They have assured the union they want to work with us to ensure when these vehicles are utilized, we can ensure safe systems of work. **Therefore we repeat our advice** that members do not volunteer to ride these vehicles, until we have completed this work and dealt with the issues regarding second contracts. Thanks to members that resisted the carrot of extra cash and have helped force management back to the table. Hopefully this time management will address the issues.

It could be said that local managers have misled staff over the TRV's however it is more precise to say that lack of questioning by local managers before passing on details of schemes such as the TRV has resulted in members viewing anything that is said with a high degree of scepticism.

2. Large scale Incidents

Despite the best (untested) computer software available being used to predict when and where all incidents will occur, several incidents have occurred since its introduction that could not have been envisaged, this fact shows that by its very nature the incidence of fire is unpredictable and Management should be building in additional capacity to allow for these eventualities when resources are stretched beyond the limit. It will be interesting to watch what develops in this area.

Several members have contacted the newsletter to raise concerns about the lack of welfare arrangements at these large incidents, at the latest job at Aztec Chemicals in Crewe, a lack of toilet facilities for crews has been highlighted. It is not acceptable for firefighters to be expected to *'nip behind a bush'* or *'tie a knot in it'*. This matter will be pushed by reps for a satisfactory answer. Also, several crews were not arriving back at their home station until 5 hours after their shift had ended, this was down to poor management of resources and a total disregard for the welfare of crews. If any other members feel aggrieved about issues such as this then the editorial team would welcome your views at the email address below.

3. Reclining Chairs, Modernisation or Act of Spite?

The arrival on stations of the reclining chairs is now days and weeks not months away. Brigade Officials have met with management and a representative from the suppliers for a view of the chairs. All reasonable arguments have been used in order to give management an alternative to these chairs including wall beds that would have allowed the rest rooms to be used for other uses and would be more cost effective in the long run with an average life span of 20 years as opposed to the chairs with an expected life of 2-3 years.

The conclusion drawn by most members is that Management have acted out of spite by forcing staff to rest in these chairs with no regard for the long term adverse health issues. The decision to remove the beds has been taken by Officers who previously rested on beds when they were on station but now that they are in positions of authority see fit to tell us that it's about public image and is no longer acceptable to use beds.

Members need to stiffen their backbones and tell management at each and every opportunity what a spiteful act it is to remove the beds for unjustifiable reasons, remember failure to stiffen your backbone will lead to poor posture and you won't be able to get 3 hours rest before you have to get up and walk around to prevent DVT!! Wholetime members are the only members of staff not permitted to lie down horizontally during designated rest periods whilst providing cover!
Fairness, equality....answers on a post card please!

4. Membership

All members are asked to notify the Brigade Membership Secretary, Dave Carruthers (Green Watch Warrington) of any changes in personal details including addresses. This can be done via email or by using the forms available from your branch/section rep. An accurate address is especially important in order to receive postal vote forms and your personal copy of the FBU Firefighter Magazine.

5. CPD Update

At a special convened meeting of the JCNP the union had no option but to reject the Cheshire model and opt for the National Agreement, for the following reasons. (See *minutes of JCNP attached*)

- Each of the four elements does not stand alone as is portrayed by management but impact on each other. E.g; if you are sick you can fail not one element, but possibly three or four and lose 75%-100% of CPD, not much difference to the National Scheme.
- Watch officers on the wholetime stations will have to attend development days, off duty, to get CPD all other staff do not.
- If you have been punished once by the discipline procedure you will get punished again by being knocked back for CPD. A double whammy.
- The system seems designed to ensure less rather than more members qualify for the payment.
- The Cheshire model links evidence in the appraisal system rather than the member providing the evidence for CPD.

The FBU were not opposed in principal to the quarters, but could not accept members losing money for not attending development days, off duty, on days over and above their contracted hours.

The Brigade Officials in order to clarify several misconceptions by Management invited them to join in a letter to the National Joint Secretaries, who brokered the CPD agreement, to seek clarification on the points of disagreement. This was disappointedly rejected by Management and so the Union has written unilaterally for clarification and awaits a reply.

It is fair to say that this issue will not be sorted for the July pay packets, although the Union has asked the Brigade to pay all those eligible for CPD for this year, therefore giving enough time to thrash out an agreed system for implementation next year.

It is worth noting the official for FOA accepted the Cheshire model with no regard for those officers who are being forced to attend development days when off duty.

6. Stop Message

Without consultation, management have changed the contract for the new recruit firefighters making them, amongst other things, work up to 8 extra days for training purposes. This is outside the Grey Book and will be disputed by the union.

First the wholetime officers- then the recruits- who next to work for nothing? An attack on one section of the workforce is an attack on all.

Time to sit up and get involved.

**To contribute to further issues of Cheshire FBU News contact your
Branch rep or email: cheshirefbunews@googlemail.com**